

David Noell
Visegrad Scholarship Grantee
6/15/17

Final Report: Religion and Radio Free Europe

I had a successful research trip to the OSA Archives. I spent five days in the archive (from May 29 through June 2) and presented my findings at the “8th Annual International Student Conference of the Cold War History Research Center at Corvinus University of Budapest” hosted by Central European University, on Tuesday, June 6. The title of my talk was “Religion and Radio Free Europe: How RFE Used Religion to Combat Communism in Strategic Eastern European Countries.” Attached in this email is a copy of my PowerPoint Presentation in which I thank the International Visegrad Fund. Also, a list of the folders and books I consulted during my time at the archive can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively.

In my application for the Visegrad Scholarship, I pitched my research as a study of Radio Free Europe (RFE) policy on religion with a particular concern for how RFE reacted to religious persecution in Eastern European Soviet bloc countries. My first few days at the OSA Archives were frustrating in pursuit of this topic. I discovered that the OSA Archives hold a rich collection of research reports of the RFE research division, and that there was much within these files on the topic of religion in Eastern European countries. While I find great value in this information, I was frustrated because I was hoping for internal RFE policy and broadcast reports on how RFE responded to the religious trends and movements that were studied so thoroughly by the research division as evidenced by the reports I had discovered. I talked with archivist Robert Parnica and he helpfully explained to me what OSA did and did not have, and how the Hoover Institution at Stanford

University had the policy papers of RFE. This conversation helped me to refocus the rest of my time at OSA.

I started rethinking how these research reports would fit into my larger research goals. I am using the research I conducted at OSA as part of my dissertation in which I am researching the history of American domestic and international broadcast policy of religion. In this way, I came to see the research reports as important for my study of religious trends in Eastern European countries in the 1950s, as well as how Radio Free Europe functioned as a newsgathering organization. It became clear to me that religion, particularly the strained relationship between religious organizations and communist regimes, was a very important topic to Radio Free Europe. As I started to discover policy information and broadcast reports, I began to see how this topic that was so important to the research division was also important for RFE's broadcasts.

In doing some background reading in Arch Puddington's *Broadcasting Freedom* I came across the story of Polish defector Jozef Swiatlo. This turned out to be an important discovery for me, as the OSA Archive holds transcripts of Swiatlo RFE broadcasts regarding the communist regime in Poland and religion. I also discovered monthly RFE reports about broadcast content tucked away in what was supposed to be boxes containing weekly research reports. These monthly reports turned out to be a very valuable discovery.

With these finds, plus some important publications I discovered at the archive from the Free Europe Committee, I put together the core of my presentation for the student Cold War conference. In my talk, I looked at RFE broadcasting about religion on Voice of Free Hungary and Voice of Free Poland in the mid-1950s. I chose these two countries because the most compelling material I found in the archive – that which I found in the monthly RFE

reports – had the most interesting information regarding these two stations. I made the argument that while RFE thought of itself as creating specific and unique content for individual countries, their policy on religion was more uniform, and that this policy was largely motivated by the persecution of religion by communist regimes and in defense of religious institutions. In regard to Poland, I looked at how Voice of Free Poland covered the persecution of Stefan Wyszynski, specifically with the help of Swiatlo. And in regard to Hungary, I touched on how Voice of Free Hungary covered the persecution of Jozsef Mindszenty, and I also analyzed audience reaction reports that testified to the importance of Voice of Free Hungary's religious programming.

Moving forward, I hope to analyze the many digital photos of documents I took at the archive. As recorded in Appendix A, I consulted research collections on religion in numerous countries, including Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Romania. I believe there is an important place for these research reports in my work, especially as I learn more about the role research played in the organization, and also as I learn more about the role of the CIA in this research. Moving forward I will also be excited to learn more about the Free Europe Committee (FEC). I feel researching FEC's policy on religion will help me understand RFE policy on religion because of the foundational role FEC played at RFE.¹ To fill the gaps in my research I will be visiting the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University in late August. I feel these archives will be vital for my research on RFE policy. I also plan to explore more thoroughly OSA's digital collections.

I am very grateful for my time at the OSA Archives. The archivists were extremely helpful and generous with their time. The website is extremely searchable and easy to use. I

¹ Robert Holt's *Radio Free Europe* was influential in my desire to push my research this direction. Robert T. Holt, *Radio Free Europe* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1958).

had no difficulty discovering documents, and neither did I have any difficulty accessing documents, as boxes were made available to me quickly and without any difficulty. Most importantly, I would like to thank the International Visegrad Fund for their financial support of this project, as well as the help of Nora Ungar and Katalin Gadoros. I had a great research trip and am very grateful for the opportunity.

Appendix A, Folders

OSA 298-3-2 (Free Europe Press East Europe Publications)

- Box 1
 - *News From Behind the Iron Curtain*, February 1952
 - *News From Behind the Iron Curtain*, May 1952
 - *News From Behind the Iron Curtain*, August 1952
 - *News From Behind the Iron Curtain*, October 1952
 - *News From Behind the Iron Curtain*, March 1953
 - *News From Behind the Iron Curtain*, July 1953
 - *News From Behind the Iron Curtain*, September 1953
 - *News From Behind the Iron Curtain*, December 1953

OSA 300-7-2 (US Office Polish Subject Files)

- Box 13
 - Religion, 1956-1960
- Box 15
 - Religion: Wyszynski, 1950-1971

OSA 300-7-3 (US Office Romanian Subject Files)

- Box 12
 - Religion, 1956-1973

OSA 300-7-4 (US Office Bulgarian Subject Files)

- Box 7
 - Religion, 1953-1973

OSA 300-7-5 (US Office Subject Files Relating to Eastern Europe)

- Box 17
 - Religion, 1950-1953
 - Religion, 1954-1955
 - Religion, 1956-1967

OSA 300-7-7 (US Office Czechoslovak Subject Files)

- Box 24
 - Religion, 1949-1951
- Box 25
 - Religion, 1952-1953
 - Religion, 1954-1967

OSA 300-8-52 (Publications Department Weekly Information Letter)

- Box 1
 - 55-56

OSA 300-20-1 (Bulgarian Unit Subject Files)

- Box 176
 - Propaganda: Radio (Against RFE [Radio Free Europe]), 1952-1970
 - Propaganda: Radio (Against RFE [Radio Free Europe]), 1952-1962
- Box 180
 - Religion: Obstacles to Worship, 1953-1992
 - Religion: Persecutions, 1951-1992
 - Religion: Protestants, 1971-1991
 - Religion: Roman Catholic Church, 1959-1976
- Box 181
 - Religion: Orthodox Church, 1958-1962

OSA 300-40-1 (Hungarian Unit Subject Files)

- Box 204
 - Egyház: Állam és egyház, 1948-1963
- Box 211
 - Egyház: Evangélikus egyház, 1957-1958
- Box 212
 - Egyház: Katolikus egyház, 1948-1957
- Box 213
 - Egyház: Katolikus egyház, 1958-1960

OSA 300-40-4 (Hungarian Unit Information Items)

- Box 24
 - Religion: General, 1951-1952
 - Religion: General, 1953-1969

OSA 300-40-5 (Hungarian Unit Biographical Files)

- Box 123
 - Mindszenty, Jozsef, 1948-1953

OSA 300-50-1 (Polish Unit Old Code Subject Files)

- Box 1843
 - Religia, 1951-1953
 - Religia, 1954-1961
- Box 1846
 - Religia: Prasa krajowa, 1952 - 1954

OSA 300-50-6 (Polish Unit Program Transcripts and Background Material Related to Jozef Swiatlo)

- Box 2
 - RFE Interviews with J. Swiatlo: Inside Story: Security apparatus for persecution of the church, 1954
- Box 3
 - RFE Interviews with J. Swiatlo: Inside Story: Bezpieka in the Church Organization, 1955

- RFE Interview with J. Swiatlo: Inside Story: Some of the Patriots Priests, 1955
- RFE Interviews with J. Swiatlo: Inside Story: Cardinal Wyszynski's Prison, 1955

OSA 300-60-1 (Romanian Unit Subject Files)

- Box 438
 - Propaganda: Anti-Western, 1951-1954
 - Propaganda: Anti-Western, 1955-1972
- Box 464
 - Propaganda: RFE (Radio Free Europe), 1953-1960
- Box 518
 - Religion: General, 1948-1958
 - Religion: General, 1959-1969
- Box 522
 - Religion: Obstacles to Worship, 1951-1965
- Box 523
 - Religion: Persecution, 1956-1976
 - Religion: Communist Influenced Religious Movements, 1951-1968
- Box 533
 - Resistance and Criticism of the Regime: Religious, 1952-1969

OSA 300-85-47 (Samizdat Archive Administrative Files)

- Box 13
 - (Samizdat Archives – RFE/RL: General: Broadcast Guidance), 1958-1973
- Box 15
 - (Samizdat Archives – RFE/RL: General: Policy Statements), 1958-1972
 - (Samizdat Archives – RFE/RL: General: Broadcasting Instructions), 1970-1975

Appendix B, Books

Bischof, Anna and Zuzana Jurgens (eds.). *Voices of Freedom – Western Interference? 60 Years of Radio Free Europe*. Gottingen and Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015.

Cummings, Richard H. *Radio Free Europe's "Crusade for Freedom": Rallying Americans Behind Cold War Broadcasting, 1950-1960*. Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company Inc., Publishers, 2010.

Cummings, Richard H. "The Tangled Web: Central Intelligence Agency and The Crusade for Freedom and Radio Free Europe – The Early Years." In *Voices of Freedom – Western Interference? 60 Years of Radio Free Europe*, edited by Anna Bischof and Zuzana Jurgens 15-34. Gottingen and Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015.

Gsovski, Vladimir (ed.), *Church and State Behind the Iron Curtain: Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania with an Introduction on the Soviet Union*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger for the Mid-European Studies Center of the Free Europe Committee, Inc., 1955.

Mikkonen, Simo. "The 'Freedom Radios' in the US Cold War Strategy: A Discussion of the Projects and Objectives that Led to the Establishment of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty." In *Voices of Freedom – Western Interference? 60 Years of Radio Free Europe*, edited by Anna Bischof and Zuzana Jurgens 35-53. Gottingen and Bristol, CT: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015.

Puddington, Arch. *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty*. Lexington, Kentucky: The University of Kentucky Press, 2000.